



Support to Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement

Brief Quarterly Overview, Public Version

April - June 2011

The third quarter brought little if no change in the quagmire of Armenia-Turkey relations. Positions hardened and mutual reprimands recommenced around the April 24 commemorations. The reelection of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's party in the parliamentary elections in June 2011 largely fed the pessimism towards Armenia-Turkey rapprochement: analysts predict that Erdoğan's government will continue to link the full normalization of Turkey-Armenia relations with a resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In the meantime the conditionality regarding the opening of the Armenian border became more and more outspoken on the Turkish side in the wake of Kazan talks on June 24, 2011 about the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The current status of the Armenia-Turkey rapprochement process has created a number of political challenges and constraints. EPF and the Consortium members undertook an extensive mid-term self-assessment in order to reformulate the approach to some of the activities, re-conceptualize the project, strengthen its objectives, and identify the areas in need of new opportunities.

Over the third quarter, progress was made in a number of activities planned under each strand of the project. The list of activities includes but is not limited to the following. UMBA and TABDC completed the survey both in Turkey and Armenia and produced the first draft of the Business Opinion Leaders' Research. It is expected that business communities in Armenia and Turkey, as well as other local and international stakeholders, will be able to use the research results to strategically plan their cooperation. YPC's and Izmir University's research teams completed the first draft of the media bias research, which will make it possible for stakeholders in the media to explore the strengths and weaknesses of mutual coverage during 2008-2010, and will increase the opportunity for more balanced media coverage in the future. The Facebook page entitled "4th Wave: Armenia-Turkey" continues to serve as a "one-stop shop" for information on the SATR project, Armenia-Turkey rapprochement, and relevant news reports in this context. The first draft of EPF's research on unexplored opportunities in civil society dialogue between Armenia and Turkey has been completed. It is based on the premise that civil society dialogue can have a meaningful impact on international affairs and the relations between countries. EPF organized a meeting of Armenian organizations engaged in Armenia-Turkey dialogue attended by over 50 representatives from 20 organizations. The event presented an experiment to enhance the cooperation among various civil society organizations in Armenia while they work on Armenia-Turkey dialogue. The possibilities of organizing a similar meeting for Turkish organizations will be explored over the next quarter.

The second TV talk show was recorded with the participation of Turkish partners in May 2011 and broadcast by Yerkir Media TV network, through which the Armenian public had the opportunity to receive direct information/commentary from the Turkish side. In May 2011, an Armenia-Turkey Policy and Media Discussion was organized in Yerevan culminating in the Armenia-Turkey Journalism Award ceremony for the Armenian winner. EPF and Anadolu Kültür produced two documentaries focusing on the commemoration of April 24 events in 2011 in Armenia and Turkey. While Anadolu Kültür will make efforts to feature the films at a number of international film festivals including the Istanbul International Film Festival in April 2012 this will be the first time Turkish civil society is openly discussing commemoration of the genocide in the Turkish media. The world premieres of five other Armenian-Turkish documentaries supported by the Armenian-Turkish Cinema Platform (ATCP) took place during the 30th Istanbul International Film Festival in April 2011 with the cinema hall full of local and international audience. Another Armenian-Turkish co-production documentary project was selected by ATCP to receive USD 30,000 from the SATR project. More than 20 open-door inquiries and proposals were received under the Armenia-Turkey open-door grants scheme, which focuses on increasing the opportunity for Armenian and Turkish stakeholders from civil society, the media, and the business community to promote bilateral relations. A total of five projects with a total value of approximately USD 90,000 were approved by the Armenia-Turkey Open Door Selection Panel comprising representatives of Armenian and Turkish partner organizations engaged in the SATR project. The approved projects support engagement of Turkish participants in an international film festival for children and youth organized in Yerevan, establishment of an information and consulting center for Armenian and Turkish businesses, organization of Gyumri-Kars economic forum, research focusing on Armenian-speaking Hamshen Muslims residing in Turkey and a documentary film on Armenian migrants traveling on a bus to Turkey.

The SATR project continues to establish linkages between both different objectives of the project and other ongoing Armenia-Turkey projects. The string of events that bring together a wide range of professionals, including civil society representatives and the media, puts the subject of Armenia-Turkey rapprochement under a stronger spotlight. With this in mind, a calculated effort was made to make the Armenia-Turkey Media and Policy Discussion held in Yerevan in May 2011 overlap with the visit of Armenian and Turkish journalists, who were in town at the time as part of a bus tour organized under the Dialogue Building Between Armenia and Turkey supported by the US Department of State. This synergy resulted in higher attendance of Turkish participants and greater coverage of the event in both the Armenian and the Turkish media.

A number of activities are envisaged for the next quarter, including a media and policy discussion in Turkey, a ceremony for the Turkish winner of the journalism award, premieres of the ATCP-supported films at the Golden Apricot International Film Festival in Yerevan, a workshop for Armenian and Turkish filmmakers, a visit of Youth Bank members from Turkey to Armenia, and others. The SATR project will continue applying flexibility to adapt to the political situation and use the opportunities that allow for greater space for dialogue between the people of Armenia and Turkey.

USAID and the Consortium Members support Armenia-Turkey rapprochement by facilitating engagement between civil society groups, establishment and development of business partnerships and regional professional networks, and enhanced understanding between the people, for peace and economic integration in the region.

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